

Attendees

- **Steering Committee Members**

- Allison Lamey
- Austin Hill
- Belinda Juran
- Beth Tripathi
- Bobby Tugbiyele
- Bopha Boutselis
- Carl Howell
- Chris Hayes
- Ciiru Ekop
- Claire Ricker
- Cormac Hondros-McCarthy
- Dean Jenkins
- Dennis Mercier
- Levenia Furusa
- Enrique Vargas
- Ethan Yang
- Felice Kincannon
- George DeLuca
- Gerard Frechette
- Juan Carlos Rivera Aviles
- Kerry Jenness
- Laura Lamarre Anderson
- Leslie Briones
- Mary Wambui
- Matt Lucas
- Michelle Rivera
- Maxine Farkas
- Mona Tyree Harris
- Narin Sinuon
- Neyder Fernandez
- Perry Downs
- Rita Mercier
- Ronald Gentle
- Ryan Gilday
- Sanary Phen
- Steven Oliver

Agenda

01. Team Introductions + Welcome

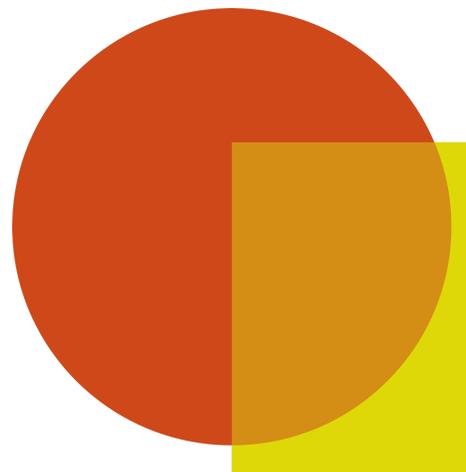
- a. City Team
- b. Steering Committee
- c. Consultant team

02. Project Overview

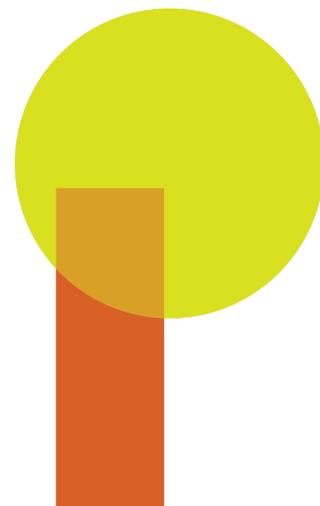
- a. Project Focus
- b. Phases
- c. Your role

03. Community Engagement

- a. Focus
- b. Timeline & Activities
- c. Breakout rooms



- Suzanne Frechette
- Valerie Galvao
- Vaughn Horn
- Vivian Merrill
- Yun-Ju Choi
- **City Staff**
 - Francesca Cigliano
 - Camilo Espitia
 - Jess Wilson
 - Sophie
 - Dylan Ricker
- **Consultant Team (Utile)**
 - Will Cohen
 - Andrea Baena
 - Taskina Tareen
 - Rahi Patel



Meeting Notes

01. Team Introductions + Welcome

a. City Team

- i. Francesca Cigliano welcomed the Steering Committee and planning staff from the City of Lowell introduced themselves. Andrea provided an agenda for the meeting.

b. Steering Committee

c. Consultant team

- i. Matthew Littell introduced Utile, the lead planning, engagement, and design consultants for Lowell Forward. Staff from Utile then introduced themselves.
- ii. Will Cohen provided an overview of the entire consulting team, which includes team members not present at this meeting.

02. Project Overview

a. Project Focus

- i. Will provided the Steering Committee with an overview of the comprehensive planning process, beginning with Vision and Values, moving on to Goals and Objectives, and culminating in Actions and Strategies.
- ii. Will also clarified the scope of the comprehensive planning process, which includes recommendations for land use changes and other spatial issues, but does not directly initiate processes like zoning rewrites.

b. Phases

- i. Will reviewed the project timeline, including themes and actions for different phases of the project. Lowell Forward will progress from Learning and Visioning to Testing Future Visions to Developing the Plan. Each phase includes a variety of public engagement events and outreach activities.

c. Your role

- i. Will asked the Committee to provide input and feedback throughout the process. He also asked Committee members to recommend strategies for outreach and engagement.
- ii. Will emphasized that engagement encompasses far more than any one project team can take on by themselves. Engagement is a holistic process driven by City staff, the consultant team, the Steering Committee, and the community.
- iii. **Poll #1: What are you both excited about and willing to help with the most? (Multiple Choice)**

1.

	# of Votes	% of Votes
Discuss concerns and goals	34	20%
Review draft documents, data, and findings	31	18%
Refine plan recommendations	25	15%
Offer guidance on public engagement strategies	24	14%
Help facilitate macro public engagement events (citywide)	15	9%
Lead micro public engagement events (citywide)	17	10%
Support public engagement outreach efforts	24	14%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

03. Community Engagement

a. Focus & Community Organizer

- i. Andrea Baena introduced the Committee to the project’s engagement values: social justice and equity, building the big tent, co-ownership and stewardship, inclusive outreach methods, opportunities for education, and neighborhood-focused engagement.
- ii. Andrea also discussed the Community Organizer role. The Community Organizer is a paid position which will help facilitate neighborhood-level engagement throughout the process. We are still hiring for this position, so sharing the job posting materials widely would be very helpful!



b. Timeline & Activities

- i. Andrea provided an overview of the public engagement activities throughout the planning process.
- ii. Taskina Tareen provided more detail about different types of engagement activities. These activities range in scale from large citywide workshops to smaller listening tours and pop-up events. A diversity of approaches is intended to encourage a diversity of voices to participate in Lowell Forward.
- iii. **Poll #2: Which activities would be most successful in engaging your community? (Multiple Choice)**

1.

	# of Votes	% of Votes
Collective mapping (digital and in person)	20	10%
Street teams	20	10%
Pin up board or flyers at convenient locations	14	7%
Social Media	30	15%
Focus groups (digital and in person)	32	15%
Pop up events	24	12%
Science fair style meeting	11	5%
Pilot projects	17	8%
Surveys (mostly digital)	17	8%
Citywide public workshop	22	11%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding



iv. **Poll #3: Which activities would you be willing to help facilitate? (Multiple Choice)**

1.

	# of Votes	% of Votes
Collective mapping (digital and in person)	18	11%
Street teams	8	5%
Pin up board or flyers at convenient locations	10	6%
Social Media	19	12%
Focus groups (digital and in person)	34	21%
Pop up events	19	12%
Science fair style meeting	9	6%
Pilot projects	13	8%
Surveys (mostly digital)	12	7%
Citywide public workshop	20	12%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

c. Breakout rooms

i. Room 1 - Will + City staff (Sophie or Jess)

1. Introductions

- a. Claire Ricker - Moved in 2015, formerly with CBA
- b. John Hamblet - Resident of Pawtucketville, family has been here since the 1850s, did not grow up there. 2 jobs. Work for consulting in NY, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and social and emotional learning specialist

- c. Austin Hill - Resident of Acre. In and out since young. Working at Community Teamwork in the housing sector.
- d. Beth Tripathi - Since 2014. Circling for a while. LOVE it. Public policy analyst for schools.
- e. Vaughn Horn - Resident since 2020. Spouse and daughter in Centerville, right on the Dracut line. Architect.
- f. Mary Wambui - Since 2002. Sustainability and affordable housing expert
- g. Narin - Resident of lower highlands. Since born. Lifelong resident. System admin for an ed tech company.
- h. Vivian Merrill - Owner of merrill insurance group. Worked here since 1999. Two master plans in Chelmsford.
- i. Yun-Ju Choi - coalition for better acre
- j. Juan Carlos Rivera - Boys and Girls Club.

2. Discussion

- a. **Vaughn:** What spurred this?
 - i. **Jess:** recognizing many changes taking place since the pandemic. Previous plan was done completely in house with a \$0 budget and wasn't going to meet changing needs of the city. Many new planners are coming into cities. Much enthusiasm around it. Previous plan expiring in a few years.
 - b. **John Hamblet:** Previously $\frac{1}{3}$ of all land available for housing was in Western Pawtucketville, which led to a smaller planning effort.
 - c. **Yun-Ju Choi:** Translation services?
 - d. **Rivera:** Concerns around street teams and difficulty of having good outreach there?
 - e. **John Hamblet:** questions around why a consultant was retained
 - f. **Vivian Merrill:** What about the previous master plan?
- ii. Room 2 - Matthew + Rahi + Dylan
 - 1. Introductions
 - a. Allison Lamey - Director of the Lowell Plan, Lowell planning and financial corp - focus on econ dev in Lowell, resident, lived here most of her life, lives in Belvidere, lived in Highland and South Lowell
 - b. Michelle Rivera - Real estate broker, resident of Centralville, has lived everywhere in Lowell

- c. Perry Downs - Lifelong resident, lives in Highlands, on Conservation Commission
- d. Kerry Jenness - Downtown resident, on historic board, works for City of Lowell
- e. Cormac - Resident on sustainability council, runs a startup engineering company, lives in Highlands
- f. Enrique Vargaes O Mill City Grows - works with lowell food policy council, lifelong resident, has lived throughout Lowell
- g. Laura Lamar Anderson - Small business owner, lala books, lives downtown - used to live in South Lowell and the Highlands
- h. Sanary Phen - Lowell resident, nonprofit professional, South Lowell resident, volunteers with Cambodian american art association, writer for Lowell Sun,
- i. Bobby Tugbiyele- CEO of medical recruiting firm, Leap Network- downtown resident, UMass Lowell graduate, advisory board member of humanities and fine arts dept at UMass Lowell, board member for small business incubator program

2. Discussion: Which activities would be most successful in engaging your community?

- a. **Enrique:** different types of strategies for different types of engagement. We've done flyering around businesses, in-person meet them where you are events
 - i. There's a misconception in Lowell that everyone has internet access- that's not true. A lot of people still don't have that access. Meeting people in person tends to yield the best results for groups that are hard to reach online.
 - ii. Wealthier neighborhoods may yield better success for online engagement - they are generally more broadband accessible. In some other neighborhoods, you need to be at the park itself or be on the street meeting people to get to them
- b. **Sanary:** one of the best ways would be to integrate into where people already gather. Coalition for a better acre holds community meetings with free food (full meals, not just pizza) that are well attended. Going where people already gather is the best way because that's so much of

the work that needs to be done. Word travels fast by mouth so if a few people have a good experience at an event, they'll let others know.

- c. **Kerry:** senior center is the most utilized place for meetings because it's accessible by car and public transit.
 - i. **Sanary:** This is also where CBA (Ctr for better acre's) dinners are held.
- d. **Allison:** There are also many religious groups in Lowell that gather regularly. So having a language-specific event that can reach different faith-based communities would be good. Maybe setting up at a picnic table at a community garden where you'll catch a lot of people that will already be there on a weekend.
 - i. **Enrique:** in the community gardens, it rotates every weekend, hosts a community day (once a month), Gardeners meet up and work on those days. We had a lot of people fill out surveys while they were playing volleyball at the park. A quick survey that people were happy to take.
- e. **Cormac:** there are so many different groups in the city that something posted online can get lost. In person events have yielded the best results in my experience. There are so many active residents in this group that it shouldn't be too hard to narrow down which kinds of places might yield more engagement.
- f. **Cormac:** Does engagement include surveys? What is it we're going after
 - i. **Matthew:** We need that citywide input to craft a vision that's meaningful to the residents of Lowell. We have to steer the conversation a bit to ensure that we have a comprehensive plan that meets state requirements at the end. The closer that the plan aligns with peoples' vision and hopes for the city, the more likely it is that that vision will be implemented in 10 years down the line. What is the relevance of planning? It's on us to build trust with people - that their input matters and guides this process. The engagement will ultimately be a mixture of things.

- g. **Michelle:** There's been an influx of pop ups. Since COVID, there have been many small business owners without storefronts - a lot of popup businesses. They gather in different places and generate a lot of traffic- could be a good place to get to business owners and a wide array of residents. At some spaces, they have 20+ vendors that get very high attendance.
- h. **Laura:** public schools are a good place to connect with families. With many families, it's their only connection to the city. Middle and high school sports, family game nights at schools.
 - i. **Matthew:** Yes, we really want to engage younger people. It's about planning for their future and it's also about educating on civic engagement.
- i. **Matthew:** Differences in engagement between neighborhoods?
 - i. **Kerry:** language is important. Materials need to be translated into different languages.
 - ii. **Sanary:** I second that.

iii. Room 3 - Taskina + Fran

1. Introductions

- a. Matt Lucas - Project Manager in IT, Lives in Centralville, in Lowell for about 5 years, first time as part of Steering Committee
- b. Ron Gentle - Born and raised in Lowell, Attorney at practicing in Worcester
- c. Maxine Farkas - Artist, degree in Planning, was in charge of Western Ave studios, Lowell resident for 25 years now
- d. Mona Tyree Harris - Centralville, lived in Lowell for 50 years, works in Lowell, heavily involved in other community initiatives
- e. Ryan Gilday - Lowell resident for 20 years, lives in Belvidere, was involved with previous master plans
- f. Gerard Frechette- Third generation Lowellian, serves in planning board, was very involved in 2003 master plan committee, involved in rezoning that took place after, and part of neighborhood groups that led plan for Pawtucketville

- g. Neyder Fernandez - Life long Lowell resident, used to intern at DPD when Claire Ricker was Chief Design Planner, 2nd term as student body president at UMass Lowell, and part of nonprofits in Lowell, Lowell City learning, great Lowell community foundation, Project Learn
- h. David Turcotte - Born in Lowell, resides in Pawtucketville, Research Professor at UMass Lowell
- i. Rita Mercier - City Councilor at Lowell, 27 years, works for Middlesex County Sheriff's Department
- j. Steven Thurston Oliver - Lowell resident for 7 years, Professor at Salem State University, concerned about how UMass Lowell factors into this process
- k. Francesca Cigliano - Grew up in Lowell, Highlands, Interim Director with Development Services and point of contact for this Plan

2. Discussion

- a. **Ryan:** Will all meetings be in Zoom? Will there be an in-person component?
 - i. **Fran:** At this time planning to keep using Zoom because it's such a large group. Reserving a room for a group this big is difficult. It's also convenient for people to attend from home.
- b. **Steven:** Curious if anyone has initial thoughts on the issue he raised earlier about how UMass Lowell fits into this Plan conversation and process?
 - i. **Fran:** Have thought about this. David represents UMass Lowell in this group. We are planning to engage with UMass Lowell through a series of meetings. Their future is going to have an impact on the development of Lowell and it is important to work with them to develop a shared vision.
 - ii. **David:** Not formally representing UMass Lowell. The University is beginning its own strategic planning process over the next few months. Focus will be on campus specific development such as facilities and expansion.
 - iii. **Gerry:** Might be helpful to reach out to Adam (Backy?) - Adam was instrumental in the previous master plan with regards to UMass Lowell. One of the action plans for Pawtucketville was to

recognize UMass Lowell and other major institutions such as the hospitals. In 2006, we met with officials with the university and they had no plan for increased dormitory housing at the time - which has since exploded. Appreciates Steven's concern.

- iv. **Neyder:** UMass Lowell has its own bureaucracy - have to go through the Building Authority. Baseball park is part of UMass Lowell. (As part of student government), being asked by the chancellor to take part in the strategic planning process. Had the first survey go out - what amenities students want to see. UMassLowell values sustainability, want to make sure green spaces are taken care of. A lot of redevelopment will focus on making the area a high-tech area. Conversations to get potential employers - already collaborating with Raytheon and government institutions. UMass Lowell wants to become a research 1 institution, but previous and current chancellors have doubled down on the area having good amenities, focused on mixed-use.
- v. **Steven:** Happy about the emphasis on sustainability - that's why I was surprised about potentially removing the green space behind the (center?) to the river. Other thing is about the people living here. It's a public university - either UMass Lowell exists in the city or the city exists in the campus of UMass Lowell. Right now it feels like residents of Renaissance by the River live on the campus of UMass Lowell. Another piece of this is that it impacts the quality of people's lives. 300 people living in the Renaissance - part of concern that brought him to this committee.
- vi. **David:** There are positives and negatives about University development. During the previous master plan, the university was much smaller then and under different leadership. We've had four different chancellors since then with different priorities. The fact that the student population has doubled has put pressure on the

housing market, which has created issues with rental housing and costs in general. There are other factors that play with the real estate market pressures.

- c. **Mona:** Would like to see what the plans are for her area (Centralville). Agrees with Steven that feels like the city lives in Campus rather than the other way around. Another piece is Downtown where she works. Feels the area is not as robust as it was before. Business wise feels like a mess.
 - i. **Neyder:** Agrees with Mona. The current Chancellor is prioritizing community partnerships. Working on how to get students more involved with the larger Lowell community outside of the UMass Lowell bubble. There is institutional support for this. He can bring these concerns up during monthly meetings with the chancellor.
 - ii. **David:** A lot of people within faculty working on equity and inclusion. A lot of voices on campus will support these issues.
 - iii. **Gerry:** Mona touches on economic development importance. Downtown is in bad shape, pandemic affected the area a lot and it's a challenge. We have more negative activity there than positive activity. We must have a plan in place, and hope this master plan process will delve into that and provide guidance. Urban cities the size of Lowell are hurting all over the country.
- d. **From group chat:**
 - i. **Neyder:** Student Government is working with the Chancellor on our new strategic plan as well as the East Campus Redevelopment <https://www.uml.edu/News/press-releases/2022/EastCampusRFP013122.aspx>
 - ii. Believe the parcels in the area are being used for that because it was designated as a Opportunity Zone by the Federal Government
 - iii. **Ryan:** The current Master Plan makes quite a few references to collaboration between the city and the university. mostly with respect to housing

iv. Room 4 - Andrea + Camilo

1. Introductions

- a. Chris Hayes - Resident, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) employee
 - i. Currently Housing and Economic Development Planner for NMCOG, works at DIY Lowell, resident of Downtown, participates in Housing Production Plan (HPP).
- b. Suzanne Frechette- Resident, H4H employee
 - i. Resident. Attorney. Currently employed at Habitat for Humanity of Greater Lowell. Previously employed at International Institute of New England, CBA, Greater Lowell Community Foundation
 - ii. Long time resident, back in 2010 worked as a community organizer
- c. Belinda Juran- Resident
 - i. Works in various non profits, loves Lowell and its diversity
 - ii. Resident. Attorney. Serves on the Board of the International Institute of New England, Free Soil Arts Collective, UML School of Education, the Carr Center for Human Rights Harvard University, Lawrence Community Works, Pollard Memorial Library.
- d. Wayne Jenness - Lowell City Council
 - i. Downtown resident, moved to Lowell in 2005, represents district 4 in City Council
 - ii. One of the big pushes of his campaign was to work for interconnections and tie neighborhoods together
- e. Dennis Mercier - Resident, PCC President
 - i. Chair of Pautucketwill, interest in zoning issues
 - ii. Resident. LHA property manager. President of Pawtucketville Citizens Council.
- f. Felice Kincannon - Resident
 - i. Resident. Retired marketing professional.
 - ii. Lives in downtown Lowell currently, has lived in many places around MA. Considers that Lowell is the best place to live.

- g. Ethan Yang - Resident
 - i. Moved to Lowell in February of this year, lives in Downtown, interested in urban planning.
 - ii. Resident. Recently moved to the City. Expressed interest in zoning, and his experience in the City as a pedestrian and using public transit. Has outreach experience.
- h. Levenia Furusa - Resident
 - i. Resident. CEO & Founder of Dwelling House of Hope. President of African Cultural Association. Involvement in faith-based orgs.
 - ii. Lives in Pawtucketville, serves a lot of immigrants and refugees, all people from different countries and needs to make sure that these people are represented.
- i. Carl Howell - Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Community Teamwork, Inc.
 - i. CTI Employee (Chief Program Officer). Former Director of Housing and Homelessness Services, Director of Residential Programs at CTI.
 - ii. Has been living in Lowell for 14 years, works with the largest nonprofit in the city
- j. Bopha S. Boutselis- Resident and Educator at Lowell Public Schools
 - i. Resident. Bilingual in Khmer and English. Adjunct Math Instructor at MCC.
 - ii. Lowell resident, Centerville, teacher in LPS. Self identifies as an immigrant and as Cambodian
- k. George DeLuca
 - i. Used to work in project management in the public sector
 - ii. Retired marketing professional. Currently a writer/photographer.
- l. Valerie Galvao - Resident. Case Manager w/ background in human services.
 - i. Born in Lowell and has lived in Lowell most of her life
 - ii. Works in residential program as case manager, recently participated in coalition for better Acre
 - iii. Is interested in representing lower income families and immigrants in the plan.

2. Discussion - Which activities would be most successful in engaging your community?

- a. **Dennis Mercier:** In the Housing Authority we do a lot of organization meetings and get people involved. It is difficult to get people to go to different places. Providing free food helps. But I think that opportunities for digital participation get more people involved.
- b. **Suzanne Frechette:** At Coalition for a Better Acre what worked for us is to find people in the community who are trusted by the community and who speak Khmer, Spanish, or other languages. My hope is that the feedback we receive from the community does lead to something. People want to see the results and see how their feedback is included in the plan.
- c. **Felice Kincannon:** It is very important to clearly communicate what is in it for the people who participate in the engagement. There have been recent changes in the structure of city government, and there are important things currently going on such as ARPA funds and Mosaic Lowell (cultural economy plan for Lowell). We need to properly communicate to people the relationship between what we're doing in the Citywide plan and other ongoing plans. We also need to communicate to people how they will benefit from the plan.
- d. **Wayne Jenness:** I got excited to see maps on the list of engagement activities. My wife (attorney for the city) is involved in early stages in the new election system, and in discussions around how to draw lines for districts. I saw mapping activities as something that is interesting, but realized that folks are not as interested in drawing their own maps. I like the idea of the bulletin board posted in a convenient location. However in practice, the logistics might be challenging because in Lowell there is not a lot of cross-pollination between neighborhoods. You would need to have a lot of bulletin boards in many different languages and many different places.
- e. **Chris Hayes:** There are important voices and community leaders that show up and participate the most. The way to reach new voices is by going into the community door to door or in front of Market Basket. Having only a flier does not work as well as having a person next to the flier.

Pop-up elements can be expanded into different underground strategies.

- f. **Belinda Juran:** The difficulty with the community board idea is that it would need to be in many different places it needs. We should also consider how we would document the feedback that is written on the community board.
- g. **Camilo Espitia:** Going back to what Felice was saying, we need to coordinate all the planning efforts. We're trying to make sure that every planning exercise that we do is coordinated with what we're doing with Utile. We don't want engagement fatigue or contradictory messaging.

